

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: JUNE 28, 2006

Committee Members Present:

Supervisors O'Connor
 Sheehan
 Kenny
 F. Thomas
 Barody

Committee Members Absent:

Supervisors Tessier
 Bentley

Others Present:

Robert Phelps, Commissioner
Michael Jabaut, Director, Administrative Services
Douglas Herschleb, Director of Social Services
Joan Parsons, Commissioner of Administrative and
 Fiscal Services
Joan Sady, Clerk, Board of Supervisors
Amanda Allen, Legislative Office Specialist

Supervisor O'Connor, as Vice Chairman of the Social Services Committee, called the meeting to order at 10:22 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Barody, seconded by Mr. F. Thomas and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the joint meeting held on May 30, 2006 between the Social Services and Federal Programs Committees, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Robert Phelps, Commissioner of Social Services who distributed his agenda to the Committee members. Mr. Phelps advised the Committee that he wished to begin the meeting with item two of the agenda which was a Notice of Intent to Fill a Vacant Position of Intake Clerk in the Department of Social Services. He added that this position was vacated due to retirement.

Motion was made by Mr. Barody, seconded by Mr. F. Thomas and carried unanimously to approve the request as outlined above and refer same to the Personnel Committee. A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position is on file with the minutes.

Proceeding to item number three of the agenda, Mr. Phelps referenced the resolution request included in the agenda to extend a contract currently held with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Warren County from October 1, 2006 through September 30, 2009. He added that the contract extended the operation of a Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program for three years and also allowed the collection of \$92,632 in federal funding. Mr. Phelps noted that of the \$92,632 federal dollars received, \$1600 was forwarded to the Department of Social Services to aid in the administration of the program.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. F. Thomas and carried unanimously to approve the request as outlined above and the necessary resolution was prepared for the July 14, 2006 Board Meeting. A copy of the resolution request is on file with the minutes.

Item number four of the agenda, Mr. Phelps said, was a resolution request authorizing an extension of the agreement held with the Warren/Washington Homeless Youth Coalition. The agreement would allow for the provision of respite services and after-hours crisis intervention for the term July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007, at a cost of \$40,000 which, Mr. Phelps noted, was

detention prevention money and was 100% reimbursable.

Mr. O'Connor asked if the respite services and after-hours crisis intervention would be provided at the W.A.I.T. House (Welcoming Adolescents In Transition) location, to which Mr. Phelps responded that it was. He added that a \$40,000 appropriation was provided by New York State for detention prevention, the bulk of which was to be applied against the extension of the agreement held with Warren/Washington Homeless Youth Coalition in the area.

Mrs. Parsons stated that through the budget process, the Board of Supervisors had provided \$25,000 to W.A.I.T. House for the Homeless Youth program for the past couple of years. She wondered if these funds were passed through the Department of Social Services, would they be 100% reimbursable by New York State. Mr. Phelps responded that the funds could probably be claimed by the Department of Social Services under prevention services and receive 65% reimbursement. Mrs. Parsons suggested that this be done for the next budget and the rest of the Committee agreed. Mrs. Parsons asked Mr. Phelps if there were any limitations to the adolescents who would benefit from these funds. Mr. Phelps said that the biggest challenge was that the child must be eligible for preventive services, meaning that the youth would have to be in crisis and at risk of placement in foster care.

Motion was made by Mr. Barody, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to approve the request as outlined above and the necessary resolution was prepared for the July Board meeting. A copy of the resolution request is on file with the minutes.

Mr. Phelps returned to item number one of the agenda, a discussion of the Medicaid Cap and Weekly Shares Report. He advised that in the agenda the Committee members would find a copy of the Weekly Shares Report, a letter from the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and a handout detailing the chronology of the MMIS (Medicaid Management Information System) appropriation.

Mr. Phelps advised that the final cap for 2006 was \$10.3 million and summarized the Weekly Shares Report stating that between cost containment efforts and the Medicaid Cap the projected savings for 2006 was \$3,785,741.24. He added that this amount would have been paid by Warren County if not for the outstanding cost containment effort made by the Department of Social Services staff and the application of the Medicaid Cap.

Mr. Barody asked how often the Medicaid Cap would be re-based, to which Mr. Phelps replied that the Cap was a firm figure and would not be re-based. The base figure given would be increased by 3% each year, he added. Mr. Barody asked if the figure could be re-adjusted by the New York State Legislature in the future. Mr. Phelps advised that this was a slight possibility, but should not be as the Cap had been guaranteed by the Legislature. Mr. Barody then asked if the additional staff provided to the Department of Social Services to aid in the development of the Medicaid Cap and the cost containment effort were still necessary as the Cap had been determined and would not be adjusted. Mr. Phelps replied that the staffing was critical to the maintenance of the program and that the expenses of this staff were reimbursed by New York State.

Mr. Kenny stated that he was amazed at the amount of money provided for Medicaid and Mr. O'Connor agreed with this statement. Mr. Phelps advised that although Warren County may be somewhat 'off the hook' for the money aspect of the Medicaid program, they were still obligated

to maintain the program and provide quality service to the community. He added that administrative costs for the Medicaid program are now 100% reimbursable.

Mr. Barody stated that he was not suggesting that any staff be removed from the Department of Social Services; he simply wanted it to be on record that Mr. Phelps still required the additional staff. Mr. Phelps replied that the staff were critically necessary and that he may even require an increase to his staff in the future.

Mr. Phelps asked the Committee members to review a handout included in the agenda titled 'Chronology of MMIS Appropriation Request for 2006 Budget'. He advised that there would be an MMIS shortfall in 2006, as there was every year, due to the estimation of the Medicaid Cap. Mr. Phelps said that he had estimated the Cap to be \$9,789,422 and agreed to reduce the MMIS appropriation from \$11,371,476 to the estimated figure. On June 27, 2006, Mr. Phelps apprised, the final figures were received determining that the Cap for 2006 would be \$10,385,596, leaving a shortfall of \$956,277. He noted that reconciliation payments of \$244,092 for overpayments made to MMIS and an IGT (Inter-Governmental Transfer) adjustment of \$116,011 would be returned to Warren County by NYSDOH, leaving a total shortfall of \$596,174 for 2006.

Mr. Barody asked what the average shortfall amount has been in past years, to which Mr. Phelps replied that the figure was usually in excess of \$1,000,000. Mr. Kenny noted that because the Cap figures were now fixed there should not be a budget issue in the future. Mr. Phelps agreed the figures would no longer be estimated and there should be no shortfalls in the future. He also reiterated that administrative costs are 100% reimbursable covering the salaries of his staff. Mr. Barody asked if there was a cap on the amount of administrative costs that could be claimed; Mr. Phelps replied that there was no longer any cap for these costs. Mr. Barody asked if reimbursement could be applied at the supervisory level and Mr. Phelps advised that any costs legitimately tied to Medicaid would be 100% reimbursable. He added that in addition, any offline expenditures for Medicaid, such as transportation costs and other expenses paid out locally by accounting, are also 100% reimbursable.

Mr. Barody noted that the budget would be higher due to the fixed Medicaid Cap but there would be no shortfall or request for additional appropriations. Mr. Phelps advised this was correct and noted that the growth of the Cap was fixed and would be no more than 3% per year.

Mr. Phelps moved to item number five of the agenda, an update on the Point of Entry (POE) for Long Term Care. He advised that the POE program was an effort to bring together the Department of Social Services, Office for the Aging and Public Health to address the needs of the elderly members of the community in the best way possible. By the year 2025, 24% of Warren County's population would be 65 or older, Mr. Phelps noted, and the effort must be made to address their needs with the proper programs. To best address and meet the needs of the aging population and institute the POE process, the three departments were seeking to be placed in the same building so that the elderly may address all issues in one building, he added. Mr. Phelps advised that there was State funding granted in the amount of \$52,000 to support the POE in the first year. He apprised that these funds would be used to cover technical costs and the development of promotional and informational brochures for this program. Mr. Phelps added that clerical support was eliminated in the coordinated care unit a couple of years ago, but would be required when the POE was instituted. He said that he would contact Mrs. Parsons to discuss this and noted that because the position was related to the coordinated care unit it would be 100% reimbursable.

Mr. Phelps advised that the application for the POE was due on June 29, 2006 and that they had received a one week extension from New York State. He expressed some dissatisfaction as the State had been working on the program for four years but only gave each County a very short amount of time to reply. Mr. Phelps said that the application would be completed and submitted that day.

Mr. F. Thomas asked what the cost of the POE program was to Warren County, to which Mr. Phelps replied that the existing resources would be used in better ways, such as co-locating and using existing staff, to eliminate additional costs. He added that any additional staff would be added under the Medicaid program for which there was 100% Federal and State reimbursement, as such, the cost to Warren County for the POE program would be minimal.

Mr. Phelps apprised that the purpose of the POE program was to conserve the individuals resources so that they did not become Medicaid dependent until absolutely necessary. If the individuals could remain at home with home care as long as possible they would receive better care and a better quality of life and the cost of care would be less than nursing home expenses, he noted.

Mr. Barody said that he was glad to see that New York State was instituting the POE program as other states such as Florida had done. He said that this program was very effective as prior to this individuals were required to find the services on their own and may not have gotten the correct services at the right levels. This program allows the elderly to receive the services they require at a centralized location, Mr. Barody added.

Mr. Phelps said that until the three departments can be centralized, a virtual POE program would be used. There would be a tremendous benefit to having the three departments co-located, he added.

Mr. Barody suggested that once instituted, the POE and information pertaining to the process should be listed on the Warren County website. Mr. Phelps advised that part of the \$52,000 funded by New York State would be used to purchase a tracking system for POE users and also to provide a presence on the internet by developing a POE webpage.

Mr. Phelps advised that by harnessing available resources, costs can be contained and maintained. The POE will allow for the quality services that the residents expect of the departments, he added. Mr. O'Connor stated that the POE program was a step in the right direction and fulfilled the obligation to the elderly in the community.

Mr. Sheehan thanked Mr. Phelps and his staff for the work they have done in establishing the Medicaid Cap and for their cost containment efforts. Mr. Phelps said that he appreciated the gratitude and would be certain to express the sentiment to this staff upon his return to the department.

As there was no further business to come before the Social Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. Barody and seconded by Mr. Sheehan, Mr. O'Connor adjourned the meeting at 10:58 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amanda M. Allen, Legislative Office Specialist